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THE STORY
of
MIRA BAI.



Mira singing to her Lord.

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BUCHUN asked me to write the story of Mira. I place it before the readers.

I do not claim for it a place as history. I delight to call it a story. Based on tradition, Macaulife and Todd have done valuable work on the subject. Our contemporaries have carried out researches on Mira, and are alleged to have exploded many established traditions assigned to her especially the one which ascribes the maltreatment of Mira Bai by her husband. The fact is, the persecutions began after the death of her husband, who was all love to her, and were met at the hands of the husband's brother at the instigation of his sister Udabai. With profit readers interested in the subject might refer to either class of writings.

To me Mira is the moth that burnt itself in the candle of love for Girdhar and for all times filled the Temple of Devotion with fragrance. Undaunted by fire or frown, unperturbed by persecutions, this devotee of Śrī Kṛṣṇa sang her songs of princely renunciation and self-surrender, that shall infuse courage in the aspirant on the Path of Love. Mira lived the message she preached, scoffed at cold intellectualism and boldly proclaimed the doctrine of absolute faith in, and devotion to, the Lord.

Modern Science and Art might well mock at her poetic outbursts and call those emotional effusions as mere paroxysms of a maniac or the after-effects of an "overheated" brain; I, however, maintain that these charges are untenable. I hold it honestly and express it emphatically that the Path to Salvation lies through love and devotion, which transcend reason and intellect. Let them, who will, try it—Mira has given the lead and with a smile softly playing on her lips she beckons to us—let them who will follow.



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Flute player.

CHAPTER I.

THE DEVOTEES OF THE LORD.

OOK at these eyes, those beautiful little orbs that seem to reflect the whole universe and point to the Unknown. The gospel of Love and Truth that they are preaching, the religion of tears that they are proclaiming, the joy of holiness that they are showering, all shed a glow at once resplendent and captivating. Their language is so mute, yet so expressive; they have no tongue, yet speak so vividly of the mighty experiences of the days of separation and recite the tale of pathos, of parting and of meeting, with a clarity that transcends the attempts of the artist's brush. On canvas I have witnessed many sights, but seldom has it been rendered so living as when I saw tears of gratitude in

the penitent's eye as he sat bathing under the showers of the Master's grace, or the pearly drops in the eyes of the devotee as he sat in meditation. Few realize, much less experience, the joys that fall to the lot of the Blessed. These are the children of God, nurtured on the bed of sorrow, ridiculed by the world's scoffers, whose food has been the crushings of their heart and whose drink has been the pangs of affliction. Some born in the manger*, others discovered forlorn by the tank†, and yet others forsaken to the fire and the winds, these are the heralds that announce the approach of a higher power that points to the great IDEAL. Their joy is in the distant meeting and their satisfaction lies in the gleaming hope that sheds lustre in the distance and whose prize is the CROWN OF ETERNAL BLISS. Such are the devotees of the Lord.

I lay in the lap of my mother, hearing the tale of one such child of the Lord, when the motherly caresses lulled me to

* Lord Christ.

† Saint Kabir.

sleep and lo ! in my dreams whom else should I meet but the child of my fancy, and I cried out.....

“These tear-bedimmed eyes, these dishevelled hair, this fragile constitution, wrapped in the divine ochre, is this the child of love whose tale you were just reciting to me, mother ? In the lanes of Brindaban how like a maniac this beautiful devotee sometimes rushes sideways, sometimes dances in ecstasy as she wildly goes to meet the Idol of her adoration with open arms ! The only words that come out of those beautiful thin lips and charm the passer-by are ‘Govind, Govind, Govind.’ Sweet is their melody and rhythmic is their metre. They seem to mock at the technical rules of prosody. So comprehensive in their significance are these words as they come out of the lips of a devotee that one stares in awe at their sanctity and marvels at their meaning. They seem to lay bare to the dreamer the pathos of ages, and teach him the lesson of the highest form of love that merges the finite into the Infinite and ushers him into the mysteries of the

Unexplored Region. However mystic the words, our holy mother was in her homely way teaching the greatest lessons in the simplest language, and that language none else but the language of love and that expression no other than that of emotion. And, as she passed along the street, some bowed in reverence and a few mocked her in the same old way that greeted the great benefactor of the world by the cross. But her thoughts were centred in some higher region, and little did she care to turn round and hear the applause and the sarcasms thus showered. But many a stranger, better disposed, inquired, "And who is this blessed lady?" And the old man standing at a distance with tears in his eyes said, "My son, she is our blessed mother that has made the soil of this spot sacred, and has once more recalled the days of the *Rāsātīlā* of ages past and is enacting in our midst once again in all its genuineness and glory the drama of our Lord Kṛṣṇa." And, as she dances in ecstasy, the Lord Himself appears and makes His presence felt to everybody

seated close to the feet of the holy mother, as she sits wrapt in meditation. Once a princess, now a beggar in the lanes of love, various are her pet names; but to me the only name with which the children of the cowherds accost her as they feed her with their cow's milk and ask her to sing to them the old forlorn songs of the Gopīs of Vraja appeals the most. While round the neck of the lovely docile figure they cling and call out to their comrades, ringing the air by their cries, "Come, friends, run, enjoy; for, once more has Mira come;" and they rush and dance in the shades of the trees while Mira sings—

'Govind, Govind, Girdhar Govind.' And, as she weeps and laughs, in her ecstasy, she swoons away to rest in the lap of her dear Lord. The children terrified begin to cry, and the Lord, pitying them, rouses the fainted beauty again to pass her time among the innocent children. Thus pass the days of the holiest of the holy.



CHAPTER II.

CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE.

I got up from my reverie and, with tears in my eyes, entreated my mother once again to recite the tale of this saint, and she began:—

Born in *Samvat* 1557 in the far-off Marwar, in the village Kurkhi, 'IN THE QUEST OF THE FLUTE-PLAYER' this princess of Chitor, forsaking the pomp and glory of the palaces, started bare-footed to tread the path that led to the Abode of Eternal Bliss. In the forehead of the little child shone the signs of future greatness, as she rose up startled by the sound of the marriage procession that passed below the palace of her father, Rao Ratan Singh, and, peeping through the barred windows of the balcony

and seeing the child-bridegroom dressed artistically, this baby of five cried out, "Mother, and where is my bridegroom?" The mother smiled at the innocence of the child. She seemed to have read in her broad forehead the future greatness of her simple babe and replied (pointing to the little lovely idol of the Lord Kṛṣṇa that stood in the temple and was so much loved by the child), "Girdhar Gopal is thy bridegroom." Since then Gopal became a subject of special fascination to her. All her discourses were about this beautiful image. All her time was spent in bathing and dressing it. She worshipped it. She slept with it on a deerskin. She danced about it. She sang to it lovely songs. Its joys were her joys, and, when a slight ray of gloom was witnessed by her on its bright forehead, that would make her weep for hours, till she again saw a clear smile on the face that would captivate her heart. To everybody it became known that this mad girl seemed to read the expression of this idol, and to hold conversation with the seemingly mute Kṛṣṇa.

Thus passed some years in patiently wooing her Beloved. From her childhood, therefore, she could know of no other love but that for her dear Kṛṣṇa. This could not be tolerated by the conservative, custom-ridden family, that like others would permit no such display of fancy and would scoff at those paroxysms of devotion, and sneer at the flow of tears. In their eyes these visionary dreams had no place in the practical life of the household. They mocked at it, as they saw things from a different angle. They soon thought of a way to take the maniac out of her madness for the Lord and relieve her of the divine intoxication. Therefore messengers were despatched and great pains taken to find out a husband suited to the princess. The fateful day arrived when her daily worship was disturbed by the music of the drum, by feastings, feedings, and a variety of ceremonies; for, this was the bridal procession that had arrived at Ratan Singh's palace. Mira was married to the heir of the mighty State of Chitor—the cynosure of all Rajput eyes and a terror to the conquering

Moghuls. The husband was the valiant Bhojraj, the eldest son of Rana Sanga, whose name is writ large for all time to come in the annals of Rajasthan as the solitary figure that would own allegiance to nobody, but would rather experience all the agonies of this physical frame, and would walk bare-footed on the burning sands of Rajputana, with his hungry princes at his side and the midday sun overhead, and would patiently watch even the last particle of loaf, prepared from the bark of a tree, being snatched away from the hands of the famished children. But he would not budge an inch from the traditions of the Rajputs, that could never recognize Muslim suzerainty. It is these people that bore the banner of Rajput chivalry. It was this blood that ran in the veins of the family into which Mira Bai was married. The son, Bhojraj, the husband of this little saint, had inherited all the martial qualities of his ancestors. Any general would be proud of the personality he bore, the valiant qualities that he possessed. The blood of these Rajputs has been the

pride of India. But martial qualities have no place in the sphere of love, where humility is the ideal, and the lowly alone can attain the highest pedestal. Vanity has no place there and pride is an outcast. How could this marriage then prove to be a happy one? But blessed is Mira who left no stone unturned to please her husband and see that his mandates were obeyed. She tried to give him no occasion for offence. She stood out a sublime figure of a devoted wife, an ideal that could be the boast of any Hindu lady. But in her love for the Lord Kṛṣṇa she could accept no compromises. To her that was supreme over all duties spiritual, moral or temporal. There she stood adamant in her virgin glory, guarding her rights with meticulous care. Beyond what was necessary she recognized no vagaries in life. After finishing her household work, she would feel that all the time was the Lord's, and then she would go to her temple, where sat the joy of her heart—the little image of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and start in the company of one or two devotees the nightlong ecstatic dances before her Lord and sing songs to

Him. In her ecstatic moments, witnessing this exuberance of the heart and complete effacement of the self, the Lord would himself appear. The little lovely idol that sat mute would get up, clasp His devotee to His bosom, play the melodious tunes on the flute to her, and hold long discourses. This was Mira's joy. This was Mira's life. Mira was born for it. This was what Mira could not give up. But this frantic display of self-surrender and utter recklessness of form and formalities greatly irritated the mother-in-law and the other ladies of her husband's family. The mother-in-law, after giving her the usual lectures on the code of married life, and telling her that the discharge of marital obligations alone could lead to marital happiness as conceived by the worldly-minded, told the innocent bride to bow to the family idol of Durgā, the image of Gaurī, the goddess of *Śakti*. But the young consort was too imbued with love for her dear Kṛṣṇa to think of any other love. With tears in her eyes, in abject humility she fell at the feet of the lady and through sobs broke out—

“Mother, this head has already been dedicated to the lotus-feet of Sri Girdhar Gopal. Forgive, mother, it can bow before no other god or goddess now. Mother, do not press me any more. Your threats and coaxings leave me unmoved.” The mother found the daughter-in-law adamant in her resolve. Though in her heart of hearts she blessed the girl for her pious determination and fearless love for the Lord, yet, to keep up appearances and follow the trodden track of society’s behests, she admonished the bride. This had no salutary effect on Mira. Then came the turn of Uda, the sister of Bhojraj, to come and plead with her sister-in-law to give up her obstinacy and *yield*. YIELD—this is a horrible term to the devotees of the Lord. The strong reply that the little Mira gave to her sister’s scurrilous and offensive remarks, soon aroused the wrath of Uda. She and her companions started a regular conspiracy against her to take her to task for her *boldness* and began to defame her. They went to Bhojraj and told him that his wife held discourses with her paramours

at dead of night in the temple. That they had themselves witnessed this tête-a-tête going on every night. That the Prince could convince himself by watching it for himself. That it was a matter for shame for the family and brought a great slur upon the fair name of Chitor that the wife of the Heir apparent should carry on such liaisons. The anger of the Prince knew no bounds, blood rushed to his cheeks, and, with a sword in his hand, he hurried into the apartments of his newly wedded wife to seal her lips and stop all these scandals. Mira fortunately was not in the room. The Prince was rushing like a maniac when some kinder soul came and pacified him, told him not to lose himself so soon, but should first satisfy himself of the truth of it, lest he may have cause to repent later on. He accepted the advice. He abandoned the idea for the time being and anxiously waited for the fateful hour of the night when he was to be called in to witness the love-scene.

At dead of night the girls came to call the Prince, and provoked him by saying,

“Shame be on the family whose ladies should carry on such love-intrigues. Go now and satisfy yourself of the daily nocturnal movements of your wife, who pretends to be a great lover of the Lord and who, in spite of the repeated requests of mother, would not bow to the goddess Śakti.” The Prince rushed to the temple, unable to control his passion any longer, and there he found Mira fully absorbed in making her confessions of love to her Divine Beloved and making complete surrenders. Before Mira could finish her sentences he broke open the door and rushed towards her; but he was completely stunned when he saw no one else but Mira seated in her ecstatic mood, completely unperturbed by the entrance of the intruder and absorbed in conversing with the little Idol that stood before her. But the eyes of the Prince could not discern the Lord behind the mask that He wore, screened as they were by the veil of *Māyā*. He saw nothing else but the Idol. He caught hold of Mira and asked her with whom she was conversing. Mira, strong in the strength of her Lover,

smiled, looked up to him and said, "See for yourself." He cried, "Show me thy lover. I am athirst for his blood." Pointing to the little image in the front, she said, "There He sits; shatter Him to pieces, if you can; there is the eternal thing who has always been stealing the butter of the Gopīs in Vraja, sometimes stealing their clothes as they went down to bathe. But more than all He has stolen my heart and gives it not back. But I do not complain of it; for, therein lies my solace. See, He smiles at His mischief. No, He again assumes the old grim face. Beloved ! smile once more as You smiled of yore ! Ah no, He feels I have given myself up to the Prince. No dear, no. Wait. Oh wait. Why are You parting so early? Pray, wait. W...a...i...t. W...a...i...t. W...a...i..... (and Mira fainted away)." This was a queer experience for the Prince, who hurried away. The other girls who had followed him stood aghast, and began to see things in a different light altogether. It was an unusual experience to them. Uda ran to kiss her sister-in-law—the fainted Mira; but she was deterred from within;

for, it was she who was partly responsible for the accusations against this goddess of piety in human form. The girls could not read the mind of the Prince as he left the place.

Henceforward the Prince felt that his wife had gone mad, and so he did not for some time trouble himself with the affair. But the world saw this through the eyes of scandal, and rumour went round that Mira had started mixing freely with the Sadhus, and various were the motives assigned to the act by dame rumour. But Mira was careless of these ignoble talks that were the topic of the day; unaffected she would go on singing her old song:—

*“Now none else but Him can I claim as
my own.*

*I forsook my father and my mother and
all those that are dear to me.*

*In the company of the Sadhus I sacrificed
my world and my modesty.*

*I rushed to meet a saint when one
appeared, and wept when the worldly
crossed my path.*

*With tears I nourished the everlasting
creeper of love.*

In my search I met the deliverers—

*The saint and the Holy Name.**

*Thenceforward the Name within and the
Saint overhead have lighted my path.*

*To the Lord the servant Mira has
consigned herself.*

*What cares she for the rumours that are
current all around.”†*

She continued to mix freely with the
Sadhus. The Prince, seeing her resolve.

* In the Chapter on the doctrine of *Sabda*, this term is
explained.

† मेरे तो गिरधर गोपाल दूसरो न कोई ॥
माता छोडी पिता छोडे, छोडे सगा-सोई ।
साधौँ सँग बैठ बैठ लोक-लाज खोई ॥ १ ॥
संत देख दौड़ि आई, जगत देख रोई ।
प्रेम आँसू डार डार अमर बेल बोई ॥ २ ॥
मारगमें तारण मिले संत नाम दोई ।
संत सदा सीसपर नाम हृदै होई ॥ ३ ॥

Seventeen

was as adamant as ever, gave up his militant attitude, and got a temple especially constructed for her to carry on her devotional practices.

The news of the devotion of Mira for Kṛṣṇa spread far and wide, so much so that the Emperor Akbar and his chief musician Tansen were seized with the desire of seeing the wife of the Heir apparent of Mewar, whose songs, it was rumoured, were so full of genuine devotion for the Lord that He Himself appeared. They strongly yearned for hearing the songs sung by Mira herself. But, fearing their lives were not secure in case they went in state, they disguised themselves as mendicants, and started incognito to Chitor. After a long journey, at last, they came to the temple of Mira, where her Idol sat mute and glorious, and bowed before the seat where Mira sat in devotion before her

अब तो बात फैल गई, जानै सब कोई ।

दासी मीरा लाल गिरधर होनी सो होई ॥ ४

Lord. The new arrivals were transfixed at seeing the delicate, innocent and smiling face of the child of God, which seemed to welcome the new entrants and to shower her blessings upon them. Akbar would have rushed to prostrate himself at the feet of the devotee and disclose his disguise; but he was kept back by Tansen, who told him it would mean death to them if strict secrecy was not maintained about themselves. The Emperor then sat silently. As the devotees sat round Mira, she started singing her songs. When the moment arrived, she jumped up and started her ecstatic dances. The scene was so much enlivened that for the time being everyone forgot oneself and saw divine shafts of light shooting forth from the idol and encasing Mira in a halo. Fragrance was felt everywhere. Some lost their consciousness, seeing Mira at the height of her emotions fall flat on the ground, absorbed in divine consciousness. When Mira recovered and wanted to go away after the day's prayers were over, Akbar rose from his seat and, with folded hands, approached Mira and entreated her

to accept a little present of a necklace. Mira refused, saying that a servant of the Lord needs nothing and asks from nobody except the Lord Himself. But the Emperor humbly insisted, saying that it was an offering made at the lotus feet of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, whose image stood before him, and that she should not refuse it. The name of Kṛṣṇa—this was the strongest and the weakest point in Mira—made her thoughtful. When the thing came in the name of the Lord, she could say nothing but accept it. The necklace therefore lay at the feet of the idol. The Emperor, however, left the place with a heavy heart, steeped in reverence and love for the Lord. It was a great experience for the Emperor, and such occurrences were responsible for the tolerant nature and liberal views of the great Moghul. He was a great success in uniting the various factions; but, whatever the theologians may say, he failed in the domain of religion and spirituality. The reason is clear. He sought to reap by the sickle of knowledge the fruits of Devotion and wanted to experience with

his intellect the divine thrills which are the very life of a lover of God. No such experiences and interpretations could lighten his path. He remained the Emperor, no doubt, of the green fertile fields of India, that yielded fodder to the animals and nurtured the drosser element in man, the body. He could not reign over the human heart; for, its king sits over a subtler seat and obtains that position as the result of a different kind of training, which is the outcome of years of penance,—not the penance of body but that of desires. When humility becomes enthroned in the heart, then alone the goal is reached.

When the news spread that the strangers of yesterday were the Emperor Akbar and his musician, Tansen, and that the Emperor touched the feet of the blessed Mira, Prince Bhojraj could not contain himself any longer. Burning with anger, the words shot forth from his mouth like fire: "Could a Muslim dare approach, even to present an article to a Rajput lady, and leave the soil of Rajputana safe! Fie on ye, Rajputs, who heard it and did not

take revenge!" The Rana could not thenceforth tolerate her living in a separate temple. He was determined to remove her from the world. He therefore went to Mira and severely reprimanded her for having permitted a Muslim to enter the temple. "Drown thyself in some river", he exclaimed, "and henceforth never show thy face to the world. Thou hast brought the greatest blot on the fair name of Rajputana by allowing a Moghul to touch thy feet. Thou canst not deny the truth of it; for lo ! there is the proof of it—the Necklace."

Sufficient for the day was the tragedy thereof. The mischief was done. Rajasthan was to lose her glory for ever. The only divine being in it started on her pilgrimage of Love to the distant regions where diviner elements reigned, and for which holy mission the Creator had sent her a messenger. With the mandate of the Lord she started, like a pilgrim bound on the errand of Love, which needed the sacrifice of her life.



CHAPTER III.

ON THE ERRAND OF LOVE.

SHROUDED in melancholy that day, the devotees watched with anxious eyes the parting of their beloved,—the soul that gave them joy and blessed them with the sight of the Lord,—now started with a divine message to meet the Lord from whom she had been living apart for so long. Born in the race of the Rajputs, whose women boasted of the custom of *Jauhar* and who had for their ideal unshaken fidelity to their husbands, she showed to the world that she would stand by the behests of her husband, implicitly obeying them, however terrible the consequences might be. This she felt was the ideal of a wife in Hindu society, and she wished to be no exception to it.

Prompted by the idea of obeying the mandates of the Rana, whose ignorance and hauteur were responsible for such a hasty and foolish order, the servant,—for, so does every Hindu wife delight to call herself,—made her way towards the river, which was to become holy by the last embraces of the Lord's devotee who had come to offer her holy frame to it. And, as she started on the pilgrimage, she bent low to her cherished idol, pressed it to her bosom, then individually caressed her companions, that had shared the joys and pangs of the nightlong vigils, waiting for the coming of the Divine Bridegroom, and borne ungrudgingly the ridicule of their masters. For the last time she sang those beautiful songs that had brought solace to many a bruised soul and pacified many a broken heart,—the very songs that have been sung by many a pilgrim on the path that leads Home. The meeting over, the farewell approached, after which the pilgrim started. This time the beloved idol lay not in a temple made of brick and clay, not within the structure that could be

the boast of human agency, but in the temple of the heart, on a safer pedestal which the great Architect had prepared for Himself. Thus she started, all her thoughts being fixed on their only object, and that object none else but the Lord Himself.

To-day the world's scaffold was again to be smeared by the sacred blood of the great devotee of the Lord. The martyr's tomb was again to be erected on the soil of this ungrateful world. The world's ingratitude was again to be painted on the canvas of the Universe. The lessons of their forefathers' sins were again to be taught to their descendants. Her tormentors—the blind knaves—did not realize that they were in sheer ignorance—in a fit—perpetrating once again the heinous crime that centuries before had been enacted by their brethren on a different stage and in a different clime on the Son of God.* The world seems to rejoice in such devilish acts of her sons. It seems to grow fat on the blood spilled of such pure souls,—else how to account for these

* The crucifixion of Lord Christ.

inquisitions and tortures that mark the advent of every holy saint. These are the murderers who wish to stifle the spirit that seeks to emerge forth from below the covers of dirt and mud that it has taken over itself by ages' sleep, by drowning itself in the quagmire of sensuality. Little do these people realize that these manifestations of divine love in human form are not the expressions of a maniac, but are the dramas enacted by His own children on the unholy stage of the earth to purge it of its sins and serve as object-lessons to the many yearning devotees that pray to the Master for help. Their acts are not the hallucinations of a madman, but they are the vital sparks of eternal flame for ever ablaze. It is a queer tragedy of human life that the two—the Lord and the Satan—should exist side by side in the same castle. But it is a stern reality. Reality must play in the lap of unreality. The servant,* however rebellious, has by years of devotion to the Lord earned for himself the boon that he should be permitted to carry on his work

* The Satan.

of mischief unbridled amongst the impostors. But when he exceeds the limits prescribed, the Lord Himself comes to the rescue.

In this burning ghat there is a temple, and therein sits my Lord. For what else should one call this world where the choicest jewels in man,—love, beauty, chastity, dignity and fortitude,—lie smothered at the hands of these fiends in the shape of hatred, anger, desire and pride. But there is the solace that, when untold misery becomes rampant, He comes.

“Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bhārata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I Myself come forth.

“For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.”*

* यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे ॥

(*Gītā* IV. 7-8)

The mischief of Satan is proverbial. Here it appeared in the form of wrath in the Rana, who denounced the beloved Mira and gave her the peremptory mandate—"drown thyself in the river and never henceforth show me thy face." How patiently she bore the verdict ! Fully did she prove the divine lovers' practice to show forbearance under torture for the sake of their Beloved to a degree unsurpassed in human history. Complete surrender of the body and extreme recklessness about it and laying it down at the altar of love is considered as the highest form of sacrifice in the world. But the Lord's devotee has yet a higher ideal.

He considers the sacrifice of the body as the lowest order of offering the devotee can make to the Lord. The standard with which the actions of the two are to be judged is, therefore, different. In the sphere of the world it is apparent that the beloved must be convinced that the lover has genuine affection for her, and a Laila

must have her Majnun for whom to show rank carelessness in respect of her body and abhorrence for the rules of society, and a Parviz, the absolute devotion of Khusru. If such tests are applied in the base worldly love, what finer tests must not an aspirant in the region of divine love volunteer himself for; what fiery ordeal must he not pass through; what agonies must he not patiently bear before he can cross the threshold and get entrance into the portals of that more sublime region where love reigns supreme and eternal peace, the pleasure of which place knows no surfeiting by excess, and which is above the ravages of time. No mathematical calculation can give its idea; no formula can explain it. From her youth Mira had been equipping herself for this region. She had experienced that the meeting had drawn closer; and, as she wended her course towards the river, a beautiful smile played on her lips, and with the same old melody she sang old songs in her characteristic joyous tune, but this time with a greater vigour, as she was conscious that she had been freed from the

bondage of physical chains. In her ecstatic mood she would jump high in the air and cry out "Govind, Govind, Govind," and sometimes she would weep and repeat "Govind, Govind, Govind." Thus she reached the river wherein she was to drown herself in compliance with her husband's wishes. There she stood on the banks of the river, a statue in meditation, resplendent in its virginity, enrapturing in its dignity and shining in its glory. All the elements seemed to stand in awe, while the bosom of the river heaved visibly, none could say why—whether in joy at the thought of her receiving a celestial being in her lap, or in sorrow at the ingratitude of the world, at her subjecting such a fair creature to physical pain. Mira stood in a contemplative mood, thinking of the distant regions. It was now evening and the sun shed its last rays to kiss the feet of the Universal Beloved and then went low, not to rise again for the day. In an instant the conch and bells started their music in the temple at a distance. At their sound Mira was reminded of her hour of worship. The

thought of sitting for devotion irresistibly came into her mind. She looked for a seat, and at once felt that the best place was the lap of the Lord Himself. There was no time to waste. With all the vigour she prepared to jump into the river, and, as the feet were just about to leave the ground, a hand from behind grasped her. Mira looked behind and whom else would she see but her beloved Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who stood smiling in His proverbially childish fashion at her. Mira fainted. She had found the lap of the Lord, as she desired, wherein to pray, as the evening had approached and the hour of prayer had come.

Mira opened her eyes. The Lord smiled and said, "Your life with your mortal husband is over. Now you are Mine. Go now and henceforward seek Me in My kingdom—in the bowers of Vraja and in the lanes of Brindaban. A final clasp: a last embrace: now I go. Watch how I fly!"



CHAPTER IV.

IN QUEST OF THE FLUTE-PLAYER.

MIRA started for Brindaban, singing and dancing in the way as she passed. As she crossed the burning sands of Rajputana, her face did not betray one single sign of physical pain or suffering. All the way nothing came to her lips but "Girdhar Gopal: He is my all-in-all, I have no one else to call my own."*

Whoever saw her was peculiarly moved, and everybody was drawn towards her. The heart of the poor was filled with sympathy for her, and they requested her

* मेरे तो गिरधर गोपाल दूसरो न कोई ॥

Girdhar Gopal.

to share with them their unostentatious meals. The children took her to be their mother who had for long been away from them. She, on her part, clasped them; for, she saw in them so many Kṛṣṇas. Her touch was magical, and her look captivating. Everybody wanted her blessings, and returned overjoyed after seeing her with the Lord's name on her lips. It was apparent that the Lord, taking compassion on them, had sent them His own child as the messenger to deliver them His message—the secret of divine bliss. They would not let her part. But to her the Lord's mandates were supreme and she would waste no time in answering the Divine Call. She therefore went on and on for days and nights, cheerful and unfatigued, till she reached the suburbs of Brindaban. There, as if by intuition, the cowherds' children recognized her, ran to her and, forgetting all decorum and decency, kissed her, raised her up and cried out, "Come, friends, she has come." They had recognized the *Gopī* that had been absent from Vraja for so long. She

Thirty-three

reciprocated those sentiments of love thus showered upon her; for, were they not the genuine outpourings of affection and the fragrant draughts of pastoral love? They forced her to dance, and, when they felt she must have been tired.—little did they know that those feet knew no tiring—they gave her fresh milk to drink and the piece of the loaf that was lying in the cupboard. They brought her water and cleansed her feet, and in the midst of such exuberance of affection she lifted her head to see who it was that was playing those touching tunes that enraptured the heart and sent a quiver through it: and whom else would her eyes meet but the Lord Himself, seated on yonder tree, witnessing His own *Līlā*. As she ran to catch Him, He disappeared. Mira lay weeping, and the children started coaxing and consoling her. After some time she recovered and started on her journey in spite of the children's vain entreaties to stay for some days more.

Her eyes could not be arrested by any other thing in the world except the purpose

in hand, and that purpose was none else but the love for the Lord, and that mission no other than the journey to His place. Thus, nothing, not even the children's entreaties, howsoever genuine, could divert her from her purpose, which was to meet the Lord at Brindaban. At last the journey was over and she reached the place and there fell in a reverie. In her dreams she looked about herself and seemed to recognize the old place. She remembered the good old days when she had with other Gopīs played with the boy Kṛṣṇa, danced with Him and had been the butt of all His jokes. She remembered that she was Rādhā in her past life and had adorned the place and taught the womenfolk the ideal of selfless love for their consorts. She rose from the reverie and found herself entirely amongst new surroundings. She tried to find the old places. They were all gone, and huge buildings stood in place of lovely bowers where the dramas were enacted by Lord Kṛṣṇa. She went about and rested in the temple dedicated to the Lord. As she passed through the streets,

people laughed at her. Careless of the caustic remarks, she went on intuitively. As evening approached, she went out to beg for food. Having got some, she took it to the banks of the Jamuna, offered it to Lord Kṛṣṇa and partook of it. During night she sat in prayers, her little Kṛṣṇa before her, and passed hours in devotion as usual, careless of the new surroundings. To her there was nothing new. It was a return home, and not a streak of care was visible in her face. There she sat all aglow with divine fervour. She had not long to stay. Like the moths that surround the lamp, devotees began to gather round her. The news spread all round that Mira had come. All seemed to recognize her. Her name seemed to be familiar to everybody. News spread far and wide that the Lord Himself visited Mira while she sat in devotion and danced in ecstasy. People started on the holy pilgrimage to visit her. This news also travelled to Chitor, and devotees arrived from there and begged Mira to return to her native place. Since her departure from there they had been

much in trouble. The Rana himself, realizing his folly, repented his words and, dressed like a mendicant, came to Brindaban to seek her forgiveness. Dressed in saffron, he approached Mira and asked her for alms.

Mira. What alms can you expect from a beggar ?

Rana. You can give me whatever I want.

Mira. Then ask.

At this, the Rana removed his disguise, disclosed his identity and sought her forgiveness. Mira, recognizing her husband, fell low at his feet. She acceded to his entreaties, and consented to accompany him back home.

On arrival in Chitor her time was passed in prayers in the temple. This continued for some time. Bhojraj died while Mira was only twenty-three, and only ten years had elapsed after her marriage. She now felt more at liberty to carry on her devotional practices. But

*The pain of Mira will vanish,
O Lord, when You act the physician.**

The persecution of Mira continued day and night and she was ridiculed for mixing freely with the tonsured mendicants and for dancing before the Lord's image. She was asked to give up this dancing and singing as it cast a shadow on the fair name of her family. Her characteristic reply is contained in her following lines:—

*Mine is Girdhar Gopal, none else.
He who wears the peacock crown is
Mira's Lord;*

*Father, mother, brother or kin, none
is mine.*

*I have flung the pride of my family:
what care I for any one !*

* हे री मैं तो प्रेम दिवानी, मेरो दरद न जानै कोय ॥
सूली ऊपर सेज हमारी, किस बिध सोना होय ।
गगनमँडलपर सेज पियाकी, किस बिध मिलना होय ॥१॥
घायलकी गत घायल जानै, की जिन लाई होय ।
जौहरीकी गत जौहरी जानै, की जिन जौहर होय ॥२॥
दरदकी मारी बन-बन डोलूँ, बैद मिल्यो नहीं कोय ।
मीराँकी प्रभु पीर मिटै जब, बैद साँवलियो होय ॥३॥

*Living in the company of saints, I
bade good-bye to the world and its
opinion.*

*I tore aside my veil of many hues and
bedecked myself with coarse thread;
Pearl and corals have I cast aside to
weave the garland of wild flowers.*

*With my tears for water, have I
nourished the creeper of love;
Now that the creeper has spread, the
fruit shall be joy itself.*

*The milk churn have I twirled with
deep emotion,
And butter have I gleaned: let him
who would, have the leavings.*

*I was born for devotion's sake, but
the sight of the world made my heart
captive.*

*Mira is Thy maid, O Lord Girdhar;
save me now.**

* मेरे तो गिरधर गोपाल, दूसरो न कोई ॥
जाके सिर मोरमुकुट, मेरो पति सोई ।
तात-मात, भ्रात-बंधु, आपनो न कोई ॥१॥



A snake in a basket.

How could such a child be loved in this world ! All sneered at her, but she did not care. Her heart aimed at pleasing one and one alone, and that was the Lord Himself.

The Rana was always busy inventing a new form of torture for her. Once he sent a snake in a basket to her with a message that it contained a garland of flowers. Mira, after performing her ablutions, sat before it. On opening it she

छाँड दई कुलकी कान, का करिहै कोई ।
संतन ढिग बैठ बैठ, लोकलाज खोई ॥२॥
चुनरीके किये टूक, ओढ़ लई लोई ।
मोती-मूँगे उतार, बनमाला पोई ॥३॥
अँसुवन जल सींच-सींच, प्रेमबेल बोई ।
अब तो बेल फैल गई, आनँद फल होई ॥४॥
दूधकी मथनियाँ, बड़े प्रेमसे बिलोई ।
माखन जब काढ़ लियो, छाछ पियै कोई ॥५॥
आई मैं भगति काज, जगत देख मोही ।
दासी मीराँ, गिरधर प्रभु, तारो अब मोही ॥६॥

discovered a beautiful image of her Divine Beloved.

The Rana then tried another trick. This time he sent her a cup of poison, saying it was nectar. Mira, after performing her prayers, took it to her lips and quaffed the deadly liquid, which was really transformed into nectar. She has described these incidents of her life in the following beautiful song:

*Rana made a present of a basket of
serpent.*

*Mira performed her ablutions and put
her hands into it.*

*Lo ! it was turned into an image of
the Lord.*

*Rana sent a poisoned cup: having
performed her
prayers, Mira drank of it.*

It had changed into nectar.

*Rana sent a bed of nails for Mira to
sleep on.*

Evening fell and Mira slept on it.

*Lo ! it had transformed into a bed
of roses.*



*Mira's Lord, ever beneficent, keepeth
 Thou her out of all trouble.
 Mira has dedicated herself to Girdhar
 and roams about in ecstatic mood
 arising out of deep love.**

* साँप पिटागे राणा भेज्यो,
 मीराँ हाथ दियो जाय ।
 न्हाय धोय जय देखण लागी,
 सालगराम गई पाय ॥ १ ॥

जहरको प्यालो राणा भेज्यो,
 इमरत दियो बणाय ।
 न्हाय धोय जळ पावण लागी,
 अमर हो गई जाय ॥ २ ॥

सूळ सेज राणाने भेजी,
 दीजो मीराँ सुवाय ।
 साँझ भई मीराँ सोवण लागी,
 मानो फूल बिछाय ॥ ३ ॥

मीराँके प्रभु सदा सहाई,
 राखो बिघन हटाय ।
 भक्ति भावसे मस्त डोलती,
 गिरधर पै बलि जाय ॥ ४ ॥

The mystery behind these miracles can only be explained by her love for the Lord.

Steeped in the wine of love, the lover sees nothing else but the wine all round. The whole panorama is dyed red. The very wine seems to pervade and fill the atmosphere by its fragrance. The whole consciousness is gone. Nay, the devotee himself becomes symbolic of it. Everything that he takes smells of that wine. His love is responsible for that conversion.

When she was thus tortured and troubled at her place, and when it became impossible for her to carry on her devotional practices, she sought the aid of one who could understand her condition. She addressed the following lines to a renowned contemporary saint—Tulasidas:—

*All the dear ones of my household only
create greater trouble
Over my association with the Sadhus,
and in my devotion cause
me intense pain.*

*From my childhood have I made the
child Girdhar my friend.
The bonds of attachment have grown
too strong for me to break.**

Tulasidas gauged her mental agony and physical pain and came to her rescue. He replied thus:—

*Those who do not hold Rāma and
Sītā dear,
Shun them as if they were thy dire
enemics, though ever so closely related.
Prahāda defied his father, Vibhīṣaṇa
deserted his brother and Bharata
forsook his mother.
Nay, Bali disowned his preceptor
and the
Gopīs left their husbands in order to
meet the Lord, and the behaviour of*

* घरके स्वजन हमारे जेते, सबन उपाधि बढ़ाई ।
साधुसंग अरु भजन करत मोहि, देत कलेस अघाई ॥१॥
बालपनेसे मीराँ कीनी, गिरधरलाल मितार्ई ।
सो तो अब छूटै नहिं क्योंहु, लगी लगन बरियाई ॥२॥

*them all was a source of happiness
 and a blessing to the world at large.
 It is in relation to God alone that all
 kith and kin are worthy of love.
 What is the good of the eye-paint that
 only serves to make one blind !
 Take up the hint: no more can I say.
 He is in every way a noble friend,
 worthy of thy adoration and dearer to
 you than your very life,
 Who can generate affection for the
 Lord: such is the opinion of Tulasidas.**

* जाके प्रिय न राम बैदेही ।

तजिये ताहि कोटि बैरी सम, जयपि परम सनेही ॥

तज्यो पिता प्रह्लाद, बिभीषन बंधु, भरत महतारी ।

बलि गुरु तज्यो, कंत ब्रजवनितनि, भये मुद-मंगलकारी ॥१॥

नाते-नेह रामसों मनियतं, सुहृद-सुसेव्य जहाँ लौं ।

अंजन कहा आँखि जेहि फूटै, बहुतक कहौ कहाँ लौं ॥२॥

तुलसी सो सब भाँति परम हित, पूज्य, प्रानते प्यारो ।

जाते होय सनेह रामपद, एतो मतो हमारो ॥३॥



CHAPTER V.

THE GOSPEL OF LOVE.

THE wild tale of pathos shall ever remain writ large on the Temple of Love. She lived on tears and she slept on tears: this shall be the language of love in which Mira will go down to posterity. This child of the Lord, nursed in the best of the worldly circumstances, feeling disgusted with the obstructions placed on her meeting freely her Divine Beloved, directed her course to those very regions where His kingdom lay, where the mad ravings of the world could not reach her and where the darts of Satan fell scotched like so many pieces of feather. She had started in search of a place where she could lie undisturbed in the thoughts of her Beloved. She was a child that did not look on Him with the dwarfed vision of the world's artist. While freedom was her creed and

liberty her watchword, the slaves of forms, formalities and dogmas could not understand her. Her bondage lay in her love for her Beloved, and the subtle chains of love that she put on herself were not visible to many eyes. She started on her way to Brindaban. Her journey over, she found herself ushered into the region of love, affection and beauty, where she could with freedom continue her search for the Beloved.

At Brindaban this messenger from the Lord preached the cult of *Bhakti*. Beautiful are the dramas she has enacted on this world's stage; lovely are the paintings she has painted on the canvas of life, and charming is the music of the poems she has given to posterity, steeped in mystic lore and perfect in their rhythm and symphony. The music of her songs thrills the heart. It is in concord with the soul. Peace dawns as if by the help of some miraculous power. To the dying and the broken heart they apply the balsam of life and give unction to the soul.

In the ruthless sea of life there are

many whirlpools, through which these devotees have steered clear, unscathed, and pointed the Way. But it is not a lesson that can be learnt by rote. It is the fortunate one alone that is afforded the opportunity to learn. By her life Mira showed there is no reason for an aspirant to get disheartened when she, descended from a noble and conservative family, could row her boat safely through the troubled waters and conventions of the world, unchilled and unruffled by adverse winds, regardless of the sarcasms of the world, and in the teeth of mighty persecutions. Her path was the simplest and yet the most difficult, which can be followed without going into the forests or practising penances. It can be acquired in a moment—for; it comes as a gift and none can claim it as of right. An aspirant has only to find out one who knows the mystery, one who is dear to the Lord; for, he is the best inter-ceder who can speak for us to Him. It was this search for the Master (*Guru*) that made her start on her errand and she was fortunate when she found her Teacher and

through him the Way Home. But, before she met Raidas, she had to undergo painful ordeals, both external and internal, in her noble cause—love.

Who understands what is love. It is inexplicable. It can be described only by those who have had an experience of it themselves. Its signs are various and varied. It is known by its effects. A blank face and a vacant eye may be an index of the burning heart within. The attributes of Love are the same everywhere. It is a perilous position in which the lover places himself, but one which he will not willingly give up at any cost. It is a grief in which one feels pleasure. When he recites the tale of separation, it is with a view to consoling himself. Although the sword of *Māyā* hangs overhead, yet he is unhurt. And where is sleep in love ! Sleep is a condition of the tired mind. None knows when the Beloved might arrive. The vigil is long continued and the effort sustained. The eyes know no fatigue. The lover looks a maniac, the result of continued wakefulness and waiting. Mira describes this condition thus:

1

*O friend, all the world sleeps: I, the
separated one, sit awake.*

*There is one like me who, sitting in her
palace of pleasure, strings together a
necklace of pearl;*

*Of yet another I know who weaves a
garland of tears.*

*The whole night I pass counting the
stars; when shall the hour of joy arrive?*

*The Lord of Mira is Girdhar Nagar: it
is by meeting Him that from anguish
she shall be relieved.**

2

*Mine eyes ache for a sight of Thee;
Since Thou hast left me, my Lord,
never have I found rest.*

- * मैं बिरहिन बैठी जागूँ, जगत सब सोवे री आली ॥
बिरहिन बैठी रंगमहलमें मोतियनकी लड़ पोवे ।
एक बिरहिन हम ऐसी देखी अँसुवन माला पोवे ॥१॥
तारा गिन गिन रैन बिहानी सुखकी घड़ी कब आवे ।
मीराँके प्रभु गिरधर नागर मिलके बिछुड़ न जावे ॥२॥

*My bosom heaves at every sound,
Thine voice sounds so sweet.*

*I have fixed my sight on Thy path and
await Thy return; the night seems a
half-year.*

*O, to whom shall I recite the tale of the
pangs of separation !*

*My friend, I feel as if the saw is being
applied to my eyes.*

*When will Thou meet me, O Lord of
Mira, who art the bestower of joy and
allayer of pain.**

3

Friend, I have lost my sleep.

*The whole night I have passed in
waiting for the Beloved.*

* दरस बिन दूखन लागे नैन ।

जबतें तुम बिछुरे पिव प्यारे, कबहुँ न पायो चैन ॥

सब्द सुनत मेरी छतियाँ काँपै, मीठे लागें बैन ।

एक टकटकी पंथ निहारूँ, भई छमासी रैन ॥ १ ॥

बिरह बिथा कासों कहुँ सजनी, बह गई करवत नैन ।

मीराँके प्रभु कब हो मिलोगे, दुखमेटन सुखदैँन ॥ २ ॥

*My comrades offered me their counsel,
 but to none did my heart pay any heed;
 Without a sight of Thee my heart is
 restless, so stubborn is my heart.
 My body is emaciated; I am without
 peace, and the name of THE DEAR
 ONE is on my lips.
 The pain of separation burns my heart,
 yet He cares not for it.
 Like the CHATAK crying out for the
 clouds, like the fish pining for the water,
 Mira lies restless in her separation from
 her Beloved—so lost to herself is she. **

* सखी, मेरी नींद नसानी हो ।

पिवको पंथ निहारत सिगरी रैन बिहानी हो ॥

सब सखियन मिल सीख दई, मैं एक न मानी हो ।

बिन देखे कल नहीं परत, जिय ऐसी ठानी हो ॥१॥

अंग छीन व्याकुल भई, मुख पिब पिब बानी हो ।

अंतर बेदन बिरहकी, वह पीर न जानी हो ॥२॥

ज्यों चातक घनको रटै, मछरी जिमि पानी हो ।

मीराँ व्याकुल बिरहणी, सुधबुध बिसरानी हो ॥३॥

Such is the state of the poor troubled soul at every moment. None likes to hear even the tale of these people. Nobody has time to listen to their effusions of emotions, unless he is similarly affected. When the restless soul wanders thus, troubled by the love current, and knows no rest, the Lord Himself comes to them, listens to their tale, rubs off their tears and clasps them to His bosom. But the panting and thirst should come first, and then alone the divine support will follow. When no peace comes, the lover wanders weary and thirsty. His condition is then like that of a fish out of water.

A victim of the shafts of love, Mira hungry and thirsty passed days and nights in silence, waiting and crying for the Beloved:

*How could I live without Hari, O mother!
For the Dear One I have gone mad; it is
like the worm eating out the wood.
Medicines and herbs do not work on me,
it appears all madness to me.*

When this climax was reached, she found her Lord, and in the following lines expressed her condition:

Rāma have I bought, O mother. Some say, it is in secret; some say, it is by stealth.

No, I have taken it to the beating of drums.

Some say, He is black, some call Him fair: with open eyes I have taken Him.

Some say He is light; and He is heavy, say some.

All the ornaments of my body have I given up even to the bracelet.

*Mira's Lord is Girdhar, so it was ordained in the previous existence.**

* माई, मैं तो लियो रमैयो मोल ।

कोई कहै छानै, कोई कहै चवडै,

लियो है बजंतौं ढोल ॥

कोई कहै काळो, कोई कहै गोरो,

लियो है मैं आँख्याँ खोल ।

Here is the secret of all religions. This is the only secret path through which one can approach Him. It is not outward show nor the following of conventional rules that can bring about this condition. The path is through love. Every moment of separation is a pang of death to the lovers. The only words that come on their lips are, "Lord, I am Thine and Thou art mine." Their lives are differently led. The decorum of society does not bind them. They live away from all forms and shows. The paraphernalia of priestcraft, the ceremonies in the temples and the formal prayers at the churches do not appeal to them. To all appearances they do not sit in prayers, yet not a moment

कोई कहै हलको, कोई कहै भारी,
लियो है तराजू तोल ॥ १ ॥

तनका गहना मैं सब कुछ दीनाँ,
दियो है बाजूबंद खोल ।

मीराँके प्रभु गिरधर नागर,
पूरब जनमको है कौल ॥ २ ॥

passes when they are not praying to their Lord. They sing with the Sufi:

*Father, I know not how to pray, nor
can I conform to the ceremonies.
I know only this much: to bow before
Thee when Thou blestest me with
Thy vision.*

Similar sentiments are embodied in what Mira said:

*How I yearn for a vision of Thee:
when shall I see Thy face?
My perplexed heart knows no peace:
meet thou soon, O friend.
Mira's Lord is Girdhar Nagar: she is
burning in separation from Him.*

The condition of the devotees is the same at all times and in all climes. The agonies of the soul know no subsiding. Days and nights pass in tortures. Sleep leaves the eyes and no craving is left for anything. Love for God is something different from that for human beings. The lover's passion is like thirst in its intensity. It is unique in its variety. Day and night,

the flame of love burns in the hearts of the fortunate few. It smoulders in the adepts, but the spark never dies out. It seems to gain energy from within. The solace comes in the flow of tears, and the creeper of love is nourished by the eyes. This is how the thirst is quenched. Their life is a queer paradox. They are supreme artists and very bad caricaturists. They paint things in their nudity. They belong to the Children's School of Art, all innocence and purity. They lose heart at the least obstruction. At the minutest apprehension of the removal of divine touch they run to the Lord and say, "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?" They alone realize the value of the ethereal touch. They do not live. They linger in the world. They lead a life of supreme indifference. The knowledge of the world is not their creed and there is no fear in throwing off the shackles of forms and ceremonies. There is a rank carelessness about their actions. This is not immodesty in them, but complete surrender to the Lord. They know of only one union—that

with the Lord. It is sacrilegious for them to enthrone in their heart any one else than Girdhar, or even to think of others. Such being the devotion, they meet the Beloved with open arms. The ties of flesh stand broken. So it was with Mira. With the Lord alone she recognized a relationship and in Him alone she found a friend. When she saw the Lord, she cast down her looks in modesty, in humble submission, and realized how long she had strayed away from Him. Her suppressed feelings gushed forth to do homage to Him. She fell at His feet, but He raised her to His bosom. She felt peace in the arms of her Lord. With the light of fidelity and singleness of purpose clear from her eyes, she started singing to Him:—

*I am true to my Lord;
Why should I feel abashed, O comrade,
now that I have danced in public.
All day I feel no hunger, nor find any
rest; at night my sleep is gone.
The secret arrow of love has pierced
my heart and appeared on the other
side.*

*My family and kin have swarmed
round me like bees.*

*Mira is the servant of Girdhar, the
ridicule of the world has lost its sting
for her.**

At another place she expresses this
state of fearlessness in the following lines:—

*In the presence of Girdhar will I dance.
Him I shall please by dancing, and
His lovers I shall solicit;
Love and affection shall be the trinkets
of my feet and Remembrance shall be
my dancing robe.
The world's regard and the family
dignity I shall all discard,
And I shall go and sleep on the bed of
the Beloved.*

* मैं अपने सैयों संग सँची ।

अब काहेकी लाज सजनी, परगट हो नाची ॥
दिवस भूख नहिं चैन होय कबहूँ, नींद निसि नासी ।
बेध वारको पार हो गयो, ग्यान गुन गाँसी ॥ १ ॥
कुल कुटुंब सब ही आन बैठे, जैसे मधुमासी ।
दासी मीराँ लाल गिरधर, मिटी जग हाँसी ॥ २ ॥

*Mira shall dye herself in the colour
of her Hari.**

This is how Mira lived. All her attention was directed to pleasing her Lord. She lived in love. This everlasting spring of love sprung in her after years of silent waiting and devotion for the Lord. It therefore knew no drying up. Ceaselessly it gushed out. This was renunciation, the absolute denial of everything. No place was left for an alien thought in the mind. The only craving was never to part from Him; and how sweetly she cherished the new treasure, is apparent from what she says on the subject:—

*O dwell in mine eyes Thou darling of
Nanda.
Enchanting is Thy figure and dusky*

* श्रीगिरधर आगे नाचूँगी ।

नाच नाच पिवरसिक रिझाऊँ, प्रेमी जनको जाचूँगी ॥
प्रेम प्रीतके बाँध घूँघरू सुरतकी कछनी काछूँगी ॥ १ ॥
लोक-लाज, कुलकी मरजादा, यामें एक न राखूँगी ।
पियाके पलंगा जा पौढ़ूँगी, मीराँ हरिरँग राचूँगी ॥ २ ॥

*Thy complexion and big Thy eyes;
 And so beautiful looks the flute on Thy
 lips, its note sweet like nectar.
 On Thy bosom is the Vaijayanti
 wreath:
 There is a belt of little bells round
 Thy waist, and the trinkets in Thy feet
 sound sweet.
 Thou art the giver of joys to the saints,
 O Lord of Mira and the protector of
 Thy devotees.**

What else could Mira's eyes see but the Lord? She gave herself up completely to Him. This was renunciation, the suppression of all activities and desires. This is the only channel by which men can reach Him. Renunciation is the necessary outcome of love, and love does not consist

* बसो मेरे नैननमें नँदलाल ॥

मोहनी मूरत, साँवरी सूरत, नैनाँ बने बिसाल ।

अधर सुधारस मुरली राजत, उर बैजंती माल ॥ १ ॥

छुद्रघंटिका कटितट सोभित, नूपुर सबद रसाल ।

मीराँ प्रभु संतन सुखदाई भगतबल्ल गोपाल ॥ २ ॥



Mira dancing in the presence of her Lord.

in bargaining and bartering. It does not ask for any gift or comfort in lieu thereof.

From the time the devotee sells himself to the Lord, he ceases to have anything to do with himself. All his property, wealth and pride, show and power, which he foolishly thought his, he offers to the Lord. He gives up all he has,—and, after all, what are these possessions worth, except Love. He goes to the temple, and, through the veil, he sees rays of glory shooting forth and says, “Father, I have come to Thee, helpless and infirm, but with hopes fixed in Thee. In utter humility I lay myself before Thee. Do whatever Thou wishest. Volition is dead in me. I have ceased to be my old self. Nothing is mine. Everything belongs to Thee. I come, stand and knock at Thy door. I ask for alms. Turn away this beggar if Thou so wishest: bestow on him Thy blessings if Thou so chooseth. Kick me if that is Thy wish. I am a sinner and have not the strength left in me to repent. Master, I beseech Thee: while the shadows lengthen and when the hour comes to die,

take me out of the swamps of the dirt of this world. I have nothing with which to purchase this boon. The love that I have is not the arrogant love of the world, the result of pride. It is not that which has caused so many of Thy fair children to stray from the right path and drawn them away from Thee. It is not the love for the flesh and blood, the love for the beautiful eyes or the pretty face. It is the love which is the outcome of humility. When all my companions, wealth, power and fame forsook me, and their betrayal stood personified before me, I sought the protection of Thy feet; and, in the silence of night, when everybody slept, I tossed restlessly on my bed, drenching it with tears, crying in all bitterness and asking within myself, Is this love ?

*If I knew, to love was to invite pain, I
would have proclaimed by beat of drum,
let none love.**

* जो मैं ऐसा जानती, प्रेम किये दुख होय ।
नगर ढिंढोरा पीटती, प्रेम न कीजै कोय ॥

“And, as my body has been reduced to a skeleton and the reddish glow of my cheeks has turned pale, the falling breath has entreated Death to grant but one boon—the sight of the Lord, the glorious vision,—before life passes away:—

*O black vultures, eat away everything,
leave nothing of this flesh;*

*Only leave these eyes, for they still hope
to see the Lord.*

*No, black vultures, eat away these eyes
as well;*

*Only make an offering of them to Lord,
before you devour them.”*

“And this last hope has kept life enlivened. My hope has been in the distant meeting, as in solitude I lay musing in divine thoughts. In that pensive mood Your benevolence has been my only hope. This has been the only softening element, mellowed by the fragrant memories of the passing years, when not a tear of anger has been shed at Thy seeming indifference, not a syllable has been uttered in complaint, not a gesture of revolt displayed. The hope of the distant

meeting has given me as much food as the separation itself. The painful watching of the stars in the sky and the restless tossing on the bed have for their end the gleam of the glorious future. The prop has been the divine embrace. I have tried to suppress the feelings, but the body has betrayed me. The eyes have told the tale in the language of tears. They have betrayed the path I was following in silence and in that I have found myself helpless. I can boast of no wealth or power or strength. I have no offering to make, yet I have started to have You. When I saw You, I said I wanted to purchase You. But for what price? I gave myself up to you—body and soul. What was this giving and what was this article purchased, few will know. Suffice it to say, You sold Yourself to me and I purchased You. It was a bargain. I became Yourself and You were idolised in me—a mighty comedy and a majestic melting away into Infinity.”

Mira lost herself in the Lord as the colour loses itself in the water.



CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF SABDA.

IN the beginning was the soul merged in the Lord and with the Lord. But since then æons have passed and the soul has left its abode of peace, where it lay wrapped in bliss. The ignorance persisting for ages, and the association with the grosser elements of matter and ego have covered the subtler element to such an extent that the spirit has apparently become benumbed. In the innermost core it is still alive, but the covers that it has put on have made it insensible to the Call. It has lost its sensibilities, and has become insensate to the shafts of love. They cannot pierce the dense layers the soul has put on. But at times it so happens that, when they do

pierce, the experience, howsoever short-lived, gives a thrill; but this effect is soon masked by the external reactions. If this temporary selflessness is allowed to sustain itself a little longer, real love will spring forth. These temporary flashes are not of much value to a devotee, not greatly praiseworthy even. They cannot lead the pilgrim Home. The successful termination of the journey presumes sustained effort and consequent joy:—

*During the rains, even rivulets swell
into torrents;
'Bhakti' follows the constancy of rivers
that do not dry even in summer.**

Once this *Bhakti* is aroused in this frame, it begins to respond to the Eternal; the soul then starts upwards to the real home.

* भगतिभाव भादों नदी सबै चलीं घहराय ।

सरिता सोइ सराहिये, जो जेठमास ठहराय ॥

(*Kabir*)

The soul has since its departure from the eternal Home been enjoying itself with the mind and the body.* Like the proverbial spendthrift, it is sharing with these cheats the boon of its Home. Like an ignorant child, it has fallen into bad company, and is every day descending lower and lower in search of new pleasures of a vulgar type, which makes its redemption impossible. But, before the final wreck comes, it makes amends to the Father, and is forgiven. It then begins its career afresh. It only takes time to rise to the old place once more. This often happens when it is reminded in its fallen condition of its glorious past and is assured of the forgiving nature of the Father. The innate goodness is then aroused in the child. Then it realizes that these thieves—the body and the mind—, which were to all appearances its companions, were really enjoying at its cost, as the soul was the only life-giving element. The covers of depravity are removed, it repents and then the Lord appears and makes it conscious

* *Manas and Maya.*

of its fallen condition and of His mighty forgiving nature. This realization is bound to come, as the connection of the soul is yet unbroken with the Lord. When such a stage is reached, the *Guru* makes His appearance. The Guru knows the secrets of the Divine Path, and understands the malady of the aspirant. He ministers to the ailment of his new patient. To the aspirant he describes his fall and points out to him the path, following which he can reach Home. This path is nothing else but the current of divine love that leads the individual towards the Eternal Soul. If this route were not extant, the individual soul would never experience the thrills from the Universal. The soul, when it lay in the Ocean of the Lord, was lying silent, calm and unruffled; but, when it started its journey downward, the loss of energy in the motion resulted in its depletion, and this process of fall produced sound. This sound is technically termed *Śabda* in Vedānta and Yoga. At the various stages in its descent the soul adopted the form and the colour of the

centre through which it passed. In our world it assumed the form of 'Manas' and 'Māyā'. If now the soul wants to return Home, it has to retrace its path; it has once more to draw together all the energy it had thrown outside and then to proceed back. Just as in the wilderness in this world the traveller is guided by the sound at a distance, so also the soul on its pilgrimage is guided by the *Śabda*. It is the 'Open Sesame' of the Divine Home. The soul moves on and on in reponse to it. As the sound grows clearer with the soul's advance in its upward march, the speed also increases. Like the snake that loses itself when it hears the music of the charmer's flute, the soul drinks deep of the eternal music that issues forth from itself. This music of the soul is also called by the Yogīs *Anūhata* and by the Sufis as *Saut-i-sarmadī*, the music without a beginning and an end, which never stops. When the music of this world appeals to one so much, one can easily imagine what must be the condition of the soul when it hears this divine music

all the time. This music the soul has brought with itself. It sustains it. It is under its influence that the devotee goes into trances. It is the password to reach Home. Mira called this *Śabda* 'NĀMA'. Without 'Nāma', she incessantly repeated, you cannot reach Him. It is, in fact, the realization by man of his divinity. But this, she repeated, could be possible only through the help of the Teacher. And the Teacher will come only when the aspirant lies ill, crying for the beatific vision. He gives the gift of 'NĀMA', and the path becomes accessible to the recipient.

*I obtained the gift of "Nāma";
The Sadguru bestowed the invaluable
article,
And by His kindness made me His
own.**

The love for the *Guru* must be unadulterated, unselfish and spontaneous. The *Guru* is He who will open the gate

* पायो जी मैं तो नाम रतन धन पायो ।
बस्तु अमोलक दीनी मेरे सतगुरु, कर किरपा अपणायो ॥

that guards the entrance to the Divine Throne. There must be implicit faith in him. Divided affection is abhorred by him. An honest heart wins him over. How tenderly Mira loved her Garu and with what tenacity, is depicted by her in her beautiful lines, full of pathos and music and brimming with genuine feelings of affection and respect for the Teacher:—

*My mind cherishes the love of the
Teacher's feet;
I like nothing but them: the world to
me is but a dream.
The Ocean of metempsychosis is dried
up for me: no anxiety to cross it
ails me.
My Lord is Girdhar Nagar:
My eyes have turned inward to
obtain His vision.**

* मोहे लागी लटक गुरुचरननकी ।
चरन बिना मोहे कछू न भावे,
जग माया सब सपननकी ॥ १ ॥
भवसागर सब सूख गयो है,
फिकर नहीं मोहे तरननकी ।

How many are those honest people that have the stern faith and hope in the Teacher. It is very nice to sit philosophising that the world is a dream. But these are only pious thoughts. The poet is more honest (I say honest, not correct,) when he says: 'Life is real' and 'not a dream'. Because he says what he sees. But the Teacher will open the devotee's eyes and show him the hypocrisy of the world and its transient nature. It will be only then that in disgust he will turn his back from the world and realize that it was a dream. This hollowness will be shown to him as a stern reality as God was shown to Vivekananda by his Teacher, Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as a Being that *stood face to face with him and conversed with him*. But one who for ages has been enjoying the wine administered by the body and the mind can seldom get out of the stereotyped rut to breathe the pure fresh air.

मीराँके प्रभु गिरधर नागर,

उलट भई मेरे नयननकी ॥ २ ॥

The soul in this world has put on covers with which it enjoys when it dives deep into the quagmire of sensuality. It is difficult for it to shake them off. It is only after removing these covers of dirt that it can follow the path of love, so difficult and narrow:—

*This is the house of love, not a mere
joke;
Who removes his head and lays it on
the ground shall get entrance into it.**

Let the reader judge for himself and decide how many are prepared to follow this path with equilibrium and resolve maintained throughout. Although every one is ready with his gospel and is up to deliver a sermon on the virtues of a devotee's life and the glories of the Path:

*Everybody praises the Path: few reach
the Goal. †*

* यह तो घर है प्रेमका, खालका घर नाहिं ।
सीस उतारै, भुईं धरै, तब पैठे घर माहिं ॥

† चलो, चलो, सब कोइ कहै, पहुँचा बिरला कोय ।

yet very few find the Teacher, still less obtain his favours. On whomsoever he showers his blessings, he takes him in his company, reveals to him the secrets of the Path and leads him Home. That is the beginning of real LOVE, the love that is synonymous with the Lord. The eye sees, with its senses intact, 'camels pass through the eye of the needle' and the 'seas drown in the boat'. *

"To meet the Lord is easy, to discover His lover is difficult." This is not a truism, but a truth. When the soul proceeds with implicit faith in the Teacher,—this automatically happens when the Teacher shows to the devotee his real form,—then it reaches Home and merges itself in divinity. Everything it sees there is its own. It dances in ecstasy when it sees its Lord. On one side stands the Teacher and on the other it witnesses the Lord in

* This is a miracle that the devotee sees at a particular stage in his devotion. Mind is there represented by the needle. The soul like a boat absorbs the sea, viz., the Lord.

full effulgence. In a dilemma it finds itself:—

*On whose feet should I fall, now that
I see both the Lord and the Teacher
before me ?*

*All obsience to the Teacher, who
made me reach the Lord ! **

And it falls on the feet of its Teacher, unable to understand its own action and decision. The Lord smiles and clasps the soul to His bosom. It feels the warmth of the embrace. It revives from its slumber and tastes of the eternal life. This is life immortal which it now gets. The way is through the Teacher, who is to impart the knowledge of the *Śabda*. There is no other way in this *Kali* age. Prepare for His arrival; for, sooner or later, He is bound to come. You are to be equipped, not with the riches and the wealth of the world, but with a poor man's heart, a heart that will burst forth into tears of joy at His

* गुरु गोविंद दोनूँ मिले, काके लागूँ पाय ।
बलिहारी गुरु आपकी, जिन गोविंद दिया बताय ॥

name and in which the waves of love are constantly rising, leaving no space for any other love besides that for the Holy One:—

*Narrow is the lane of love: it cannot
contain two.*

*When enters the Lord, I cease to be:
where I am, the Lord enters not. **

When this stage is reached, it is the climax. It is complete absorption in Him.

The inception of love is the result of the ascent of the accumulated energy upwards. The way upwards is through *Guru*:—

*Says Sahjo, even success in the world
without Guru is not possible:
Much less would the soul meet the Lord
without the help of Guru.†*

* जब मैं था तब हरि नहीं, अब हरि हैं, मैं नाहिं ।
प्रेम-गली अति साँकरी, तामें दो न समाहिं ॥

† सहजो कारज जगतके गुरु बिन पूरें नाहिं ।
हरि तो गुरु बिन क्या मिलें, समझ देख मन माहिं ॥

Mira was imbued with similar feelings. She cried, "Take the torch of 'Guru-Jñāna' and steer clear through the abysmal darkness of the world." What she said will be understood only by those who have passed through the path traversed by that great devotee. The fidelity required in this domain is too taxing, nay, boring at times, for the soul that has started suddenly and with great vigour at the very outset. It staggers at the first shock it receives, as it is yet raw—raw in the sense of lacking in the support of the *Guru*. But, when the *Guru* is met, the watchword of the soul is—"always with the *Guru*." This is the sign of emancipation, and, sooner or later, every soul must crave for the divine support. Then redemption is not far off. Else, like the many, it also finds a place in some abyss. The onlookers have watched with careless eyes the wrecking of many boats, but they have never cared to diagnose the cause. The phantom of death, as the dear ones have been carried on the bier, has haunted them only for a moment. The realization has been

short-lived. The attention is carried again to the wrangles of the world, and once again the soul is drowned in the sea of pain and pleasure, steeped in the desire of the world, in its joys and its sorrows. The momentary flash does cross at least once in everybody's life, and many a pious resolution is then arrived at, and solemn promises made thenceforth to follow a course that may lead Home. But their unstable position soon wrecks them on the rocks of **worldliness**. When once caught in its meshes, no amount of frowning or fawning will avail them. But even then, if he were to realize the greatness of the soul and follow its dictates to the last, there is every chance of redemption. The Teacher will give the devotee the **strength** to fight the blandishments and snares of *Māyā* and *Kāla* and ultimately tow his boat unperturbed out of the gushing current. Few realize the boon the Teacher confers although everybody is familiar with the prevailing practice in big households. The entry there is regulated by permits. It is therefore not a matter for surprise that the divine preserves

should be protected by these saints, who act as the repositories of divine secrets, mysteries and knowledge. If the *Chela* is ready, he whispers the password, and with its help the aspirant reaches the unexplored regions.

The *Guru* tells how the descent began and the agonies of the soul commenced. He knows it, as he has the experience of that region. When the ingress into the region of darkness has been through doors of pain, the way back must surely be likewise decked with wreaths of tears,—not burning tears this time, but the soothing draughts that quench the thirst of the soul. Seeing the wilderness in front and the uncertainty in the result of the espoused cause, the tiro does not grip the opportunity offered to him, but allows himself to be washed with the downward current into the region of abysmal darkness. The proverbial laziness in man, coupled with his love for pleasure does not permit him to steer through and beyond the rushes of *Māyā*. He is afraid of being drowned and desires to come out unbruised. Thus, when a beginner finds

after some time that the path is too difficult for him, he abandons it immediately. Thereupon the sparks of renunciation convert themselves into strong chains of worldliness, thus preparing the way to Hell. The solitary stars shine in the firmament of time; while some have persevered and others have sneered, the devotees have worn expectant looks. They have sat helpless and penitent, awaiting the motherly touch to come and take them up. And *the mother* has come. Their hopes have not been frustrated. The Teachers have come and opened the portals for them. There drinks the soul the nectar of bliss, unable to find words in which to express gratitude to the Teacher. In no words can it pay tribute to him, the repository of the GREAT MYSTERY, who unlocks the mysteries that lie unfathomed in the recesses of the heart.

Burning aspiration and strivings for unselfishness appeal to the Teacher most, and the language of tears pleads with him most vigorously. As the devotee lies dumb and mute in utter dejection

and looks upon him as the sole liberator of his entangled soul, he descends from the celestial heights and takes up the repentant child to his bosom and decks him with the priceless jewel of Devotion and ushers him into the Unknown region. The soul then dances in ecstasy a dance more écstatic than the dance of Śiva. It is a state far above the comprehension of the uninitiated. It knows no modesty, and yet it can by no stretch of imagination be called immodest. There is no compulsion or restraint, yet freedom clothes itself in the bonds of self-surrender and one finds oneself totally engrossed in the one thought of Him. When the eyes of the devotee fixedly gaze at the eyes of the Lord, the mind knows then of no other thoughts but thoughts divine. When one stands stupefied, amazed and absorbed in the Lord, He in his turn comes and stands face to face. Where is the place, then, for the decorum of society? It is to the Almighty that the Teacher leads the devotee and forever ushers him into the Abode of Peace.

Who is there who has not pointed out that the only way is through devotion and not through mere learning, which is the lot of the privileged few? Let the philosopher try to circumscribe the incircumscribable by mere tenets of various schools of thought, all is bound to turn into vain efforts and sure to elude their grasp. The science of to-day, boast as it may of its present-day achievements, is defective and imperfect; for, many a theory of yesterday is being exploded to-day and those of to-day will likewise be exploded to-morrow. The castle these scientists have built for themselves has defective foundations. It may collapse any moment, however honest the savants may be in their convictions. They characterise divine problems and mystic theories as absurd, because they cannot be tested in their crucibles in the laboratory. Let them first discover the crucible of the heart, clean it with their tears, and then let the experimenter—the Teacher—try the experiment, and success is sure. Then will revelation come, and an

idea of the path that these devoted few have followed will dawn upon them. Then they will realize that it was no creation of mere fancy that made the devotee mad. It was no hallucination, but a stern reality. It was actual seeing. It was actual talking. But they will find that the eye that saw it was different, the tongue that tasted it was different, the hand that touched it was different, the lips that spoke were different. All these were not the scientist's senses. They were the senses of the *Bhakṭa*, that await the revelation in the innermost recesses of the heart. They were the instruments of the soul within. Genuine *Bhakti* starts at this stage, when the soul retraces its path to find its mate. The fully developed (*Premarūpā*) *Bhakti*, of which here we find the shadow, is then being approached silently yet steadily by the soul. It was for this divine meeting that Mira at one stroke kicked off the blessings of the world and sought for higher visions. The reckless ease with which she, the lover of God, looked at these fleeting joys sends a thrill through the body. All her thoughts

were fixed in the Almighty, the beams of renunciation cast a halo all round her wherever she sat. She talked about nothing but the Lord. The conversation generally started in sighs and ended in sobs. Her heart was full with His munificence and grandeur and she could express her gratitude in no other language but the most human one, the language of tears. Her abiding faith in the Lord was a revolt against the established canons of prevalent religion, the religion of books, of ceremonies and conventions. Few understood her, not many appreciated her and still less followed her, and it was this last group that benefited the most. She was a herald of a new age—the age of *Bhakti*. With great force she proclaimed the message in tears. She was of the brotherhood of saints—saints like Kabir and Suradas. She was the Rādhā of her Kṛṣṇa, the Cowherd-boy of Brindaban, the Thief who stole the heart of her innocent companions—the Gopīs of Brindaban.

Her efforts were rewarded. Her

*I throw dust on the head of the
world, then did I attain to my
Home.*

2

*I stand waiting to know the Path: none
knows the secret.
The Satguru administered a medicine,
every pore in my body found relief.
There is no physician like the
Satguru: you ask the Vedas and
Purāṇas.
Mira's Lord is Girdhar Nagar:
Dwells she for ever in the region
of Immortality.*

1 मीरा मनमानी सुरत सैल असमानी ।

जब जब सुरत लगी वा घरकी, पल पल नैनौं पानी ।
रात दिवस मोहे नींद न आवत, भावे अन्न न पानी ॥
ऐसी पीर बिरह तन भीतर, जागत रैन बिहानी ।
कासों पीर कहूँ तनकी री, पीर में भरमूँ खानी ॥
खोजत फिरूँ बैद वा घरको, कोई ना करत बखानी ।
रैदास संत मिले मोहे सतगुरु, दीनी सुरत सहदानी ॥
मैं मिली जाय, पाए पिया अपने, तब मेरी पीर बुझानी ।
मीरा खाक खलक सिर डाली, मैं अपना घर जानी ॥
2 खड़ी खड़ी रे पंथ निहारूँ, मरम न कोई जाना ।
सतगुरु ओषध ऐसी दीनी, रोम रोम भयो चैना ॥

Guru Raidas showed her the way Home. She stuck to him and the mere thought that she was losing sight of him, would give her much pain and sorrow:—

Abandon me not, my Lord.

*I am a frail woman, my Lord, and
have no strength: you alone are my
Saviour.*

*I have no qualifications, my Lord,
you are competent in every way.*

*Where else can I go, since I am Yours?
Mira lays claim to no other master,
come to her, rescue this time **

When such is the extent of helplessness, when the devotee can rest his hope in none else, then the Satguru appears. The great Indian epic tells us that when

सतगुरु जैसा बैद न कोई, पूछो वेद पुराना ।
मीराके प्रभु गिरधर नागर, अमर लोकमें रहना ॥

* छोड़ मत जाज्यो जी महाराज ।

मैं अबला, बल नाहिं, गुसाँई ! थे हो म्हारा सिरताज ।
मैं गुणहीन, गुण नाहिं, गुसाँई, थे सिमरथ, महाराज ॥
रावरी होयके किणरे जाऊँ, थे छो म्हारे हिवड़ेरो साज ।
मीराँके प्रभु और ना कोई, राखो अबकी लाज ॥

Draupadī saw that all her relations had forsaken her, that the point of shame had been reached and she observed no help was coming, she burst into tears and turned to the Lord for rescue, and the Lord saved her honour:—

*Thou art the refuge of the afflicted,
O Lord.*

*Thou extended the garment of
Draupadī, to save her from dishonour.**

It was the same state of helplessness that Mira experienced, and she cried for help to the Lord. Mira knew that all the austerities and penances carried on even with the greatest piety and concentration could not arouse *Bhakti*. The path of *Bhakti* was different, and that was through the personal touch of the Lord's representative on earth, the intermediary between him and the Lord, the Teacher,—and Raidas in the case of Mira. When her call was heard, she rejoiced and turned fearless and revelled in joy divine. She had found the Teacher:—

* हरि ! तुम हरौ जनकी भीर ।

द्रौपदीकी लाज राखी, तुम बढ़ायौ चीर ॥

*Neither do I recognise a father nor
a father-in-law, nor do my affections
rest in my husband;
Mira met her Guru Raidas and her
Lord Govind followed in the wake.**

The Lord does not permit direct meeting. The devotee must meet through his preceptor. Her call is for all times and is most emphatic:—

“Gird up your loins, ye devotees. And if this life is spent in search, continue the search in the next also. He is bound to come at the appointed time. Before that expect nothing. When he comes, the gospel of love will be propounded to you and he will interpret the mysteries of the unknown to you and usher you in the loving and enchanting presence of the Lord. Then there will be no birth and no death. It will be all eternal life. It will be your salvation.”

* नहीं मैं पीहर सासरे रे, नहीं पियाजीरे पास ।
मीराने गोबिंद मिलियारे, गुरु मिलिया रैदास ॥



CHAPTER VII.

THE WAY HOME.

HARK ye, my friends. Silence, O my comrades. I hear the call of the Flute. I see the assembly of the saints. How He smiles as I approach Him, accompanied and guided by the Teacher. The cries of the world below do not attract me. The music of the distance enthralls my soul. I go, I go...to the



Peacock-crowned Lord.

region of peace, to the abode of bliss—the hope of many, the satisfaction of a few. There in the distance the hand is raised. How like a beautiful little thing it beckons me Home. The journey over, the traveller retraces the way, heedless of the calls behind. Like one intoxicated by those thrilling notes, I go on and on. Years of separation and pain have been recompensed by the moment's glimpse. Now the joy of it is not going to be short-lived. It is a joy that will last for ever and ever. The return is to one's own Home, where the guardian angel is the Lord Himself. There is no need for anything. It is the only self-contained Home. The drop that had gradually tried to separate itself from the Ocean and which remained connected to the fountain by an invisible thread has now returned. It is the return of the prodigal and to-day she will feast with joy and drink deep on the Lord's table.

The temple is decorated in a different style. There is solemnity and yet grandeur. All seems covered with lovely hues. All is so captivating in this temple. She has

been to Braja,—to Barsana and to Muttra,—and she has witnessed once again the dramas that were enacted centuries ago. She has waited at Dwarka and enjoyed the company of her Lord Girdhar. Now the night is drawing to a close. The dawn of her new life is slowly making its appearance. This dawn will sweep away the last remnants of the darkness of ignorance and usher in the sun of realization in all its glory. Mira must speed up. She has to perform her last rites. She has to clasp her little Image that has so often heard her supplications. She must draw near her old devotees that had wept with her as she sat reciting the tales of separation to them. They had given her hopes and soothed her in her woes of separation.

She assembles all her companions and begins her evening prayers; and, though now quite an aged lady, yet Mira dances before her Lord like a child. To-day she is all attention to everybody, and replies to every query. She sings as many songs as the devotees want. She is prepared to

meet the Lord. All the dear devotees sit in rapt attention.' To-day Mira appears so glorious. Sometimes they see Mira, at other times the Lord appearing in Mira, an unique phenomenon. They rub their eyes just to make sure if they are not dreaming, and watch closely their holy mother. They kiss her feet as she stands insensible to all that is passing round her. She sings the songs that have come down to us, and will ever arouse thrills in the body of the devotee, and point to the fair haven—the realization of man's desire, the meaning of life. Hours pass like this. Mira is in ecstasy. All round is suddenly lit up with a halo. The Lord appears—the little image opens, and cheerfully Mira enters it, meets her Lord, and her human form for ever disappears from before the eyes of the devotees. The Mira who gave the message of *Bhakti* forever disappears. Her message is simple. "None by reason of birth, poverty, age or sex will be debarred from His divine presence. The way is but one,—that of *Bhakti*. The portals will open when

the Teacher will bless the devotee with his company and teach him the mysteries of the *Śabda*. Once He is reached, there is no further or future separation possible. Sooner or later everyone is to meet his Lord. Time is a great factor, and can be shortened by the intensity of one's affection for the Lord. Burn in the separation for the Lord. But this is to come through practice of no Yogic exercises nor through mere learning. It is a gift and a boon from the Lord Himself." In fact, when once the Lord manifests Himself to the devotee, the Call becomes irresistible and the urge can no longer be held up, the devotee cannot contain himself. He proclaims with the mystic:—

"I go with a perpetual heartache. None can see God or Goddess and live."*



* From Coventry Patmore.

